

WORLD UNITY



BOOKLET No. 7

WHAT AND WHOSE IS PALESTINE

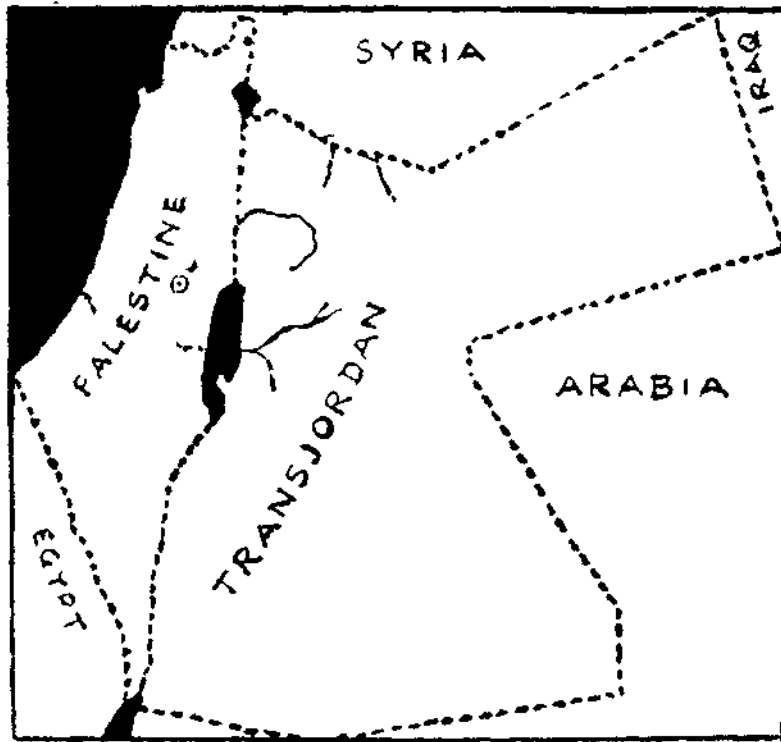
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A NEW PROPOSAL

Submitted to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry
by an Impartial Committee of the
SERVICE-NATION MOVEMENT

With Maps

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NET



PALESTINE AND TRANSJORDAN

The existing divisions, created in 1919, which have no historical basis, and separate Transjordan from Egypt (*see* p. 13).

World Unity Booklets, No. 7.

WHAT AND WHOSE IS PALESTINE?

An Historical Survey of the Palestine Problem
Prepared by an impartial Committee of the
Service-Nation Movement

With a New Solution

Illustrated by Maps

Published for
THE SERVICE-NATION MOVEMENT
by
HERBERT JOSEPH LIMITED

The Service-Nation Movement, which is dedicated to the service of humanity as a whole, invites the collaboration of specialists in all connections to study impartially and to pronounce upon world problems.

Printed in Great Britain by Edgar Dunstan & Co.,
Drayton House, Gordon Street, London, W C 1.

INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this paper, prepared by an impartial Committee of the Service-Nation Movement, is to set out the historic facts which lie behind the modern aspects of the Palestine problem. These facts ought fully to be taken into consideration if an equitable solution is to be reached, and recent events may have tended to obscure or misrepresent them. The circumstances of the past thirty years have to be related to a history which covers more than three thousand years.

No attempt is made here to discuss or assess the merits of the claims of either Jews or Arabs in the light of developments arising directly out of the First World War, or which have transpired subsequently. These developments are already receiving the full measure of attention which they deserve. The situation as it affects Palestine has undergone such rapid changes that the issues now are by no means the same as those of 1919, so that a clarification may best be reached by an objective presentation of the salient features of the story of Palestine through the centuries. This treatment is found to give rise to proposals which at the present juncture should go far towards satisfying the legitimate aspirations of both peoples.

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as circumcised, and therefore presumably meant to include Judea.

On the basis of the current non-Jewish usage the name Palestine was taken over by the Romans to denote a territory including not only the seaboard, but Judea, Samaria and even Perea beyond Jordan. This became the extent of the province of Syria-Palaestina formed by Hadrian after the Jewish Revolt of 132-135 A.D. Immediately east and south of it lay the Roman province of Arabia already established by Trajan.

Though it fluctuated in the two succeeding centuries the area of Palestine did not materially change except for a southern and south-eastern expansion at the expense of Arabia Petraea. In 358 A.D., under Byzantine rule, the southern portion (Idumea with Moab and Petra) was constituted a separate province known as Palaestina Salutaris.

By the fifth century three Palestines were defined:— Palaestina Prima (the old Philistia with Judea, Samaria and a fragment of Transjordan) with its capital at Caesarea; Palaestina Secunda (Galilee and the Decapolis) with its capital at Scythopolis (Beth-Shan); and Palaestina Tertia or Salutaris (the Negeb and the part of Transjordan south-east of the Dead Sea) with its capital at Petra. In the sixth century Palaestina Tertia had further encroached on Arabia east of the Dead Sea up to the line of the R. Arnon.

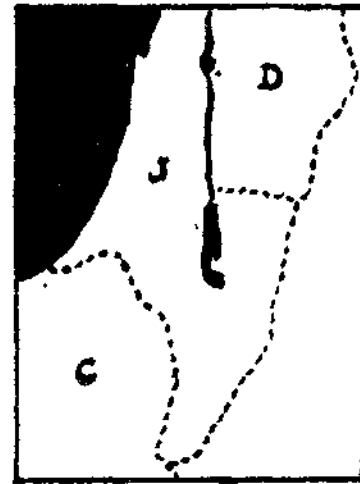
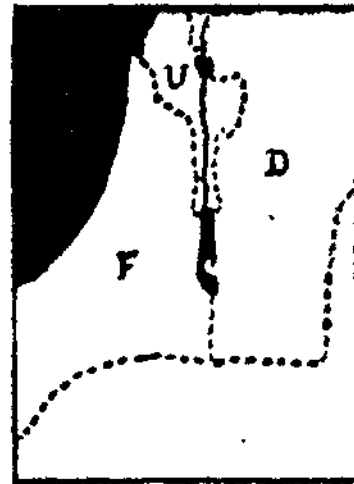
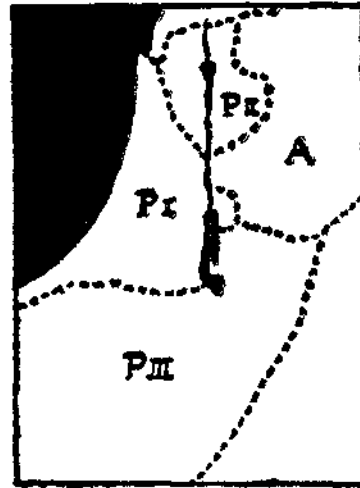
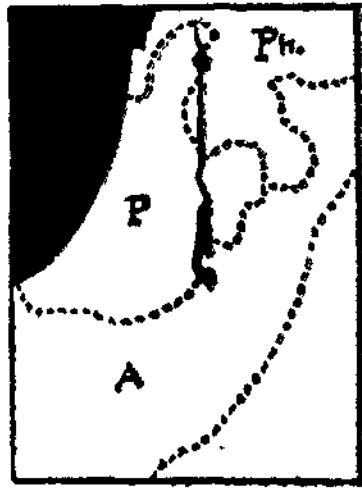
With the Arab conquest, the Calif Omar in 636 A.D. instituted a new division into military districts—junds. Only one of these, the Jund Filastin, retained the old name. This jund included most of Palaestina Prima and the western half of Palaestina Tertia. The Jund Al-

Urdunn (the Jordan) represented Palaestina Secunda with the addition of the whole Jordan valley, and what had been left of the province of Arabia was united with the larger part of Syria in the Damascus Jund.

The Christian designations, Palaestina Prima, Secunda and Tertia, were temporarily restored for ecclesiastical purposes during the Crusading period (12th-13th centuries), but their areas did not correspond with their predecessors. Palaestina Prima was now the coastal belt as far north as Carmel, known alternatively as Palaestina Maritima, under the Archbishop of Caesarea. Palaestina Secunda was the central zone with Jerusalem as the seat of the Patriarch; and Palaestina Tertia now answered more nearly to the Palaestina Secunda of the earlier period. The Latin kingdom of Jerusalem (finally extinguished at the end of the thirteenth century) had not used the name Palestine politically. For Christians the country in general was the Holy Land, while for the Moslems it was part of Ash Sham, and for the Jews it remained the Land of Israel.

Palestine or Filastin did not figure in the geographical nomenclature of the Ottoman Turks after their invasion of 1517; but the name endured. In 1583 an English Consul was appointed with the wide commission of "Consul in the parts of Alepo, Damasco, Aman, Tripolis, Jerusalem, and all other ports whatsoever in the provinces of Syria, Palestina, and Jurie" (Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, Commission given by Mr. William Harebone, the English Ambassadour, to Richard Forster. Ed. of 1598-1600, II.i.172).

Not until modern times (eighteenth century onwards) did the name Palestine come into common use in



THE CHANGING FRONTIERS OF PALESTINE

Top Left: A.D. 135 P—Palaeestina, Ph.—Phoenicia, A—Arabia Petraea.

Top Right: A.D. 500 P.I.—Palaeestina Prima, P.II—Palaeestina Secunda, P. III—Palaeestina Tertia or Salutaris, A—Arabia.

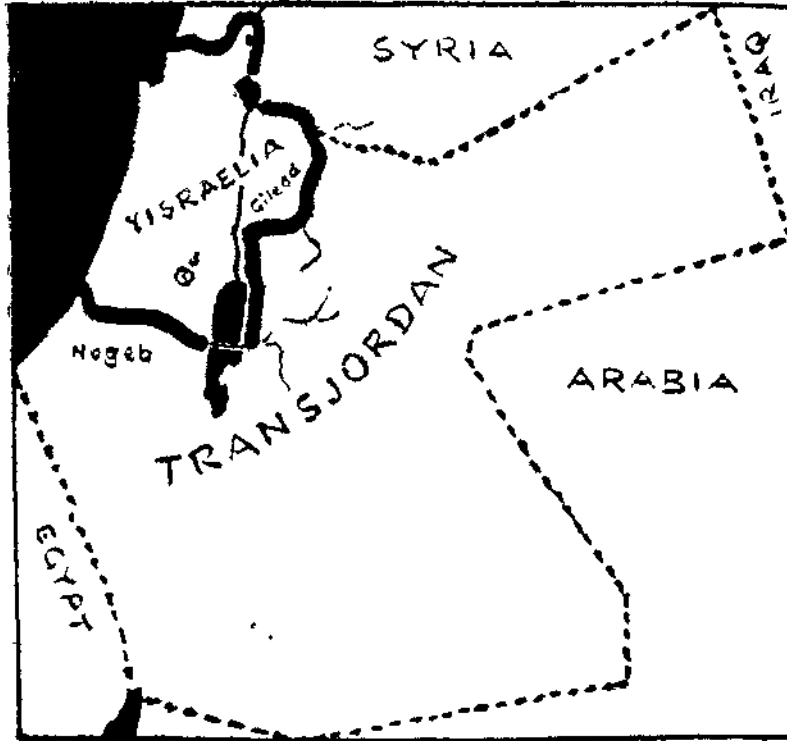
Bottom Left: A.D. 636-1099 F—Filastin, U—Al Urdunn, D—Dimashk.

Bottom Right: 1099-1187 A.D. J—Kingdom of Jerusalem, C—Califate of Cairo, D—Emirate of Damascus.

western countries as an alternative term for the Holy Land. In this sense it was applied also to parts of Transjordan (Cf. Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine, through the countries of Bashan and Gilead in 1816*). Western Transjordan, between the Yarmukh and the Arnon, is described as Eastern Palestine as recently as 1894 (George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*).

Officially, the name Palestine was employed by Great Britain in a wide context as early as 1838 at the appointment of Mr. W. T. Young as "Her Majesty's Vice Consul in Jerusalem and Palestine." He was informed (F.O. 78/368, 21st Nov. 1838): "As the ports of Jaffa and to the North as far as Sidon inclusive are within the limits of Palestine; the Consular Agents in those ports which have been hitherto under the jurisdiction of Her Majesty's Consul at Beyrout, will in future be considered as in your district and under your orders."

Before 1917 the name Palestine appears to have had no political appeal to either Jews or Arabs, so far as the modern period is concerned. It is found employed by Jewish writers during the nineteenth century only because of its current usage by non-Jews to represent the Holy Land, while as lately as February 1, 1919, an Arab Congress at Jerusalem, in a declaration forwarded to the Peace Conference, spoke of its component members as "delegates of the various towns of southern Syria, commonly known as Palestine." The delegates demanded "that Palestine be considered as an integral part of Syria, from which we were never severed, and with which we are united in race, religion, language and economics" (Clause I).



EFFECT OF THE NEW PROPOSALS

The creation of a Jewish State of Yisraelia, with Transjordan given access to the Mediterranean and linking up the Arab States with Egypt. By this arrangement the political and economic consolidation of the Arab League would be achieved without detriment to Jewish needs and aspirations. Opportunity would be given for the constitution of a "Jordan Valley Authority" on the model of the American T.V.A. for the fertilisation and settlement of large unproductive areas. Palestine disappears from the map. (Cf. with *frontispiece map*.)

CONCLUSIONS

From this historical survey it follows that the territory now defined as Palestine bears no relationship by way of extent and coverage to any former political division known as Palestine. At material times the parts of Transjordan, especially between the Yarmukh and the Jabbok, have been included in Palestine, while it may justifiably be held that the part of Palestine known as the Negeb is properly a part of Arabia.

Any consideration of the problem of Palestine ought not, therefore, to be based on the present frontiers, which have no historical justification. The issues cannot fairly be decided if these frontiers are adhered to and allowed to govern proposals for a settlement. Without seeking here to determine the nature of that settlement, it may be suggested that the cession to Transjordan of the Negeb down to the frontier of Egypt, including the seaboard and all the interior territory between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, would be a reasonable interpretation of the historic requirements. Palestine, in its most ancient significance of Philistia and with its subsequent predominant Arab complexion, would be reunited with Arabia in the State of Transjordan. On the other hand the inclusion on equally good historic grounds of the territory immediately east of the Jordan, between the Yarmukh and the Jabbok, in a Jewish State—as this for so long formed an integral part of the Land of Israel—would satisfy legitimate Jewish aspirations in line with the facts recorded here.

The name Palestine, so variously employed at different periods, might well be dispensed with completely, as it is not really wanted by Arabs or Jews, and has added a needless complexity to a difficult situation. The problem of Arab and Jewish needs may then be dealt with more equitably and freely on other grounds.

THE RULERS OF PALESTINE

PALESTINE, using the name for convenience as descriptive of the Holy Land, has throughout its history been a country constantly subject to invasion and conquest. It has seldom remained for any considerable period under the same rulership.

The Israelites in the fourteenth century B.C. were invaders and colonisers. The Syrians in the eighth century occupied a large part of the country until driven out a century later by the Israelite king Jeroboam II. The close of the same century saw the Assyrian conquests which terminated the northern kingdom of Israel. The southern kingdom of Judah endured until the Babylonian triumphs destroyed it in 587 B.C. The Jews were enabled to return by the Persians, whose dominion over Palestine continued for about two hundred years. Greek and Egyptian control succeeded, to be followed by that of the Seleucids. Under the Maccabeans Jewish rule was re-established from 165-41 B.C. when Palestine was entered by the Romans. Jewish sovereignty was temporarily restored under Herod the Great, 37-4 B.C., but on his death Palestine became a Roman province except for the brief reign of Agrippa I (A.D. 41-44).

The post-Biblical history of Palestine has been no less chequered. The break up of the Roman Empire in the West brought the country under Byzantine rule. For fourteen years, however, the country was occupied by the Persians (A.D. 614-628) through the invasion of Chosroes II. Then, after a brief interval, came the Arab conquest of A.D. 635, and Palestine became part of the

Empire of Islam, though the government alternated between Syria and Egypt. At the end of the eleventh century the country was overrun by the Seljuk Turks. This incursion was followed by the Crusades and the establishment of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (1100-1187). An attenuated form of this kingdom persisted until near the close of the thirteenth century, when Egypt under the Mameluke dynasty was again in the ascendant in Palestine. Finally came the conquest by the Ottoman Turks in 1517 and Palestine remained under Turkish sovereignty until the British occupation in 1917.

Considering this record, the words of Sir John Maundeville (traveller to Palestine in 1322) are still singularly apt. "This country and land of Jerusalem," he wrote, "hath been in the hands of many different nations, and often, therefore, hath the country suffered much tribulation for the sin of the people that dwell there. For that country hath been in the hands of all nations; that is to say, of Jews, Canaanites, Assyrians, Persians, Medes, Macedonians, Greeks, Romans, Christians, Saracens, Barbarians, Turks, Tartars, and of many other different nations; for God will not let it remain long in the hands of traitors or of sinners, be they Christians or others."

CONCLUSIONS

Palestine throughout its long history has been a battle ground of contending Powers not native to the country. Some distinction must be made, however, between conquerors who merely administered the country and those who colonised it. Of these latter the Jewish race has had the longest tenure, with the Arabs coming second. The Arab settlement being the more recent has had the

effect of giving Palestine its latest colouring, which is therefore far more Arab than Jewish. Right of conquest alone would be an insufficient cause for assigning the country to either Arabs or Jews.

3

PALESTINE AND JEWISH MESSIANISM

It is a commonplace of knowledge that since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 the Jewish liturgy and literature has kept alive the Jewish faith in the restoration to Zion and the re-establishment of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel. But these exilic longings have less weight if they are regarded as pious sentiment rather than express intention.

This cannot be said, however, of many of the Messianic manifestations that periodically roused among sections of the Jewish people expectation of immediate return to Palestine. In the second century A.D. Bar Cochba waged a war for the liberation of Palestine from the Romans. The attempt by the Jews to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem in the fourth century at the instigation of the Emperor Julian showed that confidence in the restoration continued to be active. A century later there appeared a certain Moses of Crete, undertaking to lead the Jews of that island dryshod through the sea back to Palestine; and he obtained many adherents. Between 720-723 Serenus of Syria promised the expulsion of the Moslems from Palestine and a Jewish restoration. A like object was behind the activities of David Alroy of Persia about 1160. Other Messianic claimants and movements, notably those of Asher Lemmlein in Germany (1502),

David Reubeni and Solomon Molko in the same century, and Shabbethai Zebi of Smyrna in the seventeenth century, established by the credence placed in them that thousands of Jews not only still believed in the restoration to Palestine, but were prepared to stake their all to accomplish it.

The wide range of locality of these Messianic incidents and the frequency of their occurrence reveals both the tenacity and duration of faith in the revival of a Jewish State in Palestine.

CONCLUSIONS

From the viewpoint of Messianism, which is at the base of modern Zionism, the identification of the Jews with Palestine and their certainty of return to it has been demonstrated politically in unbroken continuity for the past eighteen hundred years.

4

THE INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE

IN a country which throughout its history has suffered so many incursions of different races and has been governed by so many masters it is to be expected that the inhabitants would mainly be of mixed origin. It is still possible among native Palestinians to distinguish the features of some of the peoples who have mingled their blood at different epochs. Since the Arab invasion of the seventh century A.D. the majority of the population has been Moslem in religion; but faith is not race, and though Arab blood has prevailed for thirteen hundred years

only a minority can be said to be of pure Arab stock. This minority is represented by the Bedouin and by members of certain definite Arab tribes.

In considering the population of Palestine for the past seventeen hundred years it is important to give attention to the effects of the changes brought about by invasion, political and economic policy, and by religious and racial persecution. The consequences of frequent conquest and bad government have been extremely serious for Palestine. Productivity has been destroyed, and the population reduced by poverty and peril. This may be illustrated from the accounts of travellers more graphically than by rehearsing the wars and conflicts which Palestine has undergone.

Bertrand de la Brocquière (A.D. 1432) has left this description of Jaffa. "It formerly belonged to the Christians, and was then strong; at present it is entirely destroyed, having only a few tents covered with reeds, whither pilgrims retire to shelter themselves from the heat of the sun" (*Early Travels in Palestine*, p. 286). Henry Maundrell (A.D. 1697) says of the plain of Acre: "This delicious plain is now almost desolate, being suffered from want of culture to run up rank reeds, which were, at the time we passed it, as high as our horses' backs." Of Acre itself, he writes: "It has never been able to recover since its last fatal overthrow; for, besides a large khan, in which the French factors have taken up their quarters, and a mosque, and a few poor cottages, you see nothing here but a vast and spacious ruin." Maundrell found the plain of Esdraelon "of vast extent and very fertile, but uncultivated; only serving the Arabs for pasturage." Jericho "is at present only a poor

nasty village of the Arabs" (*A Journey from Jerusalem to Aleppo*).

This state of affairs Maundrell puts down not only to the results of war, but to the policy of the Turks. "It is the policy of the Turks always to sow divisions amongst these wild people, by setting up several heads over their tribes, often deposing the old and placing new ones in their stead, by which art they create contrary interests and parties amongst them, preventing them from ever uniting under any one prince; which, if they should have the sense to do (being so numerous and almost the sole inhabitants thereabouts), they might shake off the Turkish yoke, and make themselves supreme lords of the country" (*Ibid*, p. 429).

As a result of neglect and misrule it has been estimated that by the middle of the nineteenth century the total population of Palestine had fallen to below 200,000. This figure is little more than one third of the present Jewish population of Palestine, and about one fifth of the present Moslem population.

THE JEWS IN PALESTINE

Despite slaughter, restrictions, persecutions and expulsions the association of the Jews with Palestine has at no time since the termination of the Jewish State been severed completely. Jews continued in Palestine, and even flourished there, after the further disaster of A.D. 135. They were debarred from Jerusalem by Hadrian, expelled from Lydda by Severus (A.D. 202), excluded again from Jerusalem by Constantine (A.D. 312), but

their communities were still to be found in many places in Samaria, Galilee and the Decapolis.

Jews in Palestine supported Chosroes II when he invaded the country in A.D. 614, and though the Arab conquest a decade later than the conclusion of the Persian intrusion brought them new vicissitudes elements endured and also survived the Crusades. Benjamin of Tudela visiting Palestine (A.D. 1163) found no less than 1100 Jews in only fifteen small towns and villages.

Later by immigration Jewish numbers increased, and even at the lowest ebb of the general population in the nineteenth century, and before the earlier experimental settlements, Dr. W. M. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*) found as many as 2,700 Jews in Safed alone.

The Jewish exile from Palestine was never absolute, and but for persecution in turn by Romans, Christians and Moslems the number of their inhabitants would have remained constantly at a high level throughout the whole of the centuries under survey.

THE ARABS IN PALESTINE

The golden age of the Arabs in Palestine was from the seventh to the eleventh century A.D. Under the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem the Arab tribes were treated as chattels of the Franks, to be bought and sold and bequeathed at will, and they never afterwards regained complete political ascendancy. Arab unity was continually frustrated by the Turks, and virtually the only independent Arabs in Palestine were the Bedouin, who because of their nomad existence could not fully be controlled. These nomads preyed on the settled peasantry,

which was of mixed Arab and non-Arab stock, and thus contributed to denuding the country of its inhabitants. It is a question how far such nomads, only temporarily resident in Palestine for pasturage and plunder, can be regarded in any real sense as native. At the worst period the Bedouin represented about a quarter of the total population. They still numbered 66,500 out of a Moslem population of 759,610 at the census of 1931.

For the settled population, predominantly Arab, no statistics are available for any period before the latter half of the nineteenth century, when Turkish Government records indicate a settled population of about 270,000. This would represent a density of only 26 persons to the square mile compared with 170 to the square mile to-day.

The paucity of their numbers and the conditions under which Arabs have lived in Palestine gave no encouragement to any affection for the country or to any special political aspirations in regard to it. The kinship of the Palestinean Arabs was and still largely remains a kinship with Syria. They have thought of Palestine as Southern Syria, and the capital city to which they have looked has not been Jerusalem but Damascus. It was at Damascus at the beginning of the First World War that the Arab *Al Fata* Society determined upon revolt from the Turks and the setting up of an independent Arab kingdom of the Hejaz, Iraq and Syria. In this arrangement Palestine was understood to be a part of Syria. Before 1920 a separate Arab State of Palestine was not contemplated as Jews have envisaged Palestine as a Jewish State.

CONCLUSION

From the viewpoint of population the rights of both Jews and Arabs command respect. By more recent domicile the native Arab claim to that respect is proportionately greater than the Jewish. The sparseness of the total population prior to 1900 leaves room for the political future of Palestine to be considered on quite other grounds than numerical superiority or duration of residence. The historical alternatives lie between a Jewish State (Jewish aspect) or a Greater Syria (Arab aspect); they do not lie between a Jewish State or an Arab State in Palestine. Both Arabs and Jews in the past have so suffered from oppression and persecution that the records would appear to offer a strong case of equal rights of immigration, since each can historically justify freedom of access to the country.

5

GENERAL SUMMARY

THE territory now called Palestine is not co-extensive with any territory to which that name formerly applied. The resolution of the problem of the Holy Land has needlessly been complicated by the present boundaries. If a division were to be made answering most nearly to the historical facts the southern part of the country should be allocated to Transjordan and the northern part with a section of Transjordan east of the Jordan should become a Jewish State.

The evidence of rulership of the disputed territory does not support the exclusive claims of either Arabs or Jews. If anything the Jewish title is somewhat stronger than the Arab. If a joint State of Jud-Arabia should prove un-

practical, in which both peoples would equally participate, then the political implications of Jewish Messianism must be recognised. The continuous patriotic loyalty of the Jews to Palestine finds no corresponding sentiment among the Arabs. For the Arabs it has been the land in which they lived, but never their fatherland.

Considerations of population establish a right of full citizenship and representation for the descendants of Arabs and Jews resident in Palestine prior to 1914; but the relative emptiness of the country in the nineteenth century will not justify either an Arab or Jewish claim to full possession on grounds of occupation alone. The territory must be regarded as having become virtually unoccupied, and therefore available for resettlement by both peoples within the limits of its economic capacity. No restrictions should rightly be imposed on immigration within these limits that is not applied equally. By defining an Arab region and a Jewish region on the new basis of partition indicated in this survey the historic requirements would reasonably be met, provided that the terms of settlement debarred any discrimination against minorities remaining either of Arabs or Jews in areas granted to the other people.

NOTE.

This survey was submitted to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. The Report of that Committee has now been published and has taken into consideration some of the facts here put forward. It has, however, rejected the principle of partition. Nevertheless, there is increasing recognition that partition is inevitable if a lasting solution is to be achieved and it may well be found that the proposals in this paper are the most equitable.

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